United Nations

Press Release

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General continues to express optimism over hostage situation, saying basics are present for a swap between Israel and Lebanon.

- Secretary-General meets with Moroccan Foreign Minister and maintains position that 6 September should remain date for cease-fire in Western Sahara.

- UN Committee on Racial Discrimination calls on Iraq to provide more information so it can assess human rights situation in that country.

- Draft resolution is presented in Special Committee on Decolonization which would reaffirm right of people in Puerto Rico to self determination.

- UN Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities hears call for world conference on religious freedom.

- Caribbean countries request observer status for Caribbean Community at General Assembly.

- Eugene Adoboli appointed Executive Secretary of Joint Inspection Unit.

- UN study finds many transnational corporation activities to be environmentally sound.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar is in Geneva where he is continuing his intensive diplomatic efforts on the issue of the hostages.

Replying to questions today, the Secretary-General said he thought there was a basis for a swap between Israel and Lebanon with regard to hostages and detainees but the time frame depended on meeting which he would hold today and tomorrow. The positions of both sides were now known, he said, and it was up to him to bridge the gap. Asked about the distance between the two positions,

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the Secretary-General said "they are apart, but not that far apart -- it is not an ocean, I would say a river."

After receiving a message from the Islamic Jihad on Sunday, the Secretary-General met that evening with Israeli officials. He described their initial response as "rather positive", and added he was very pleased that the Israeli Foreign Minister had promised to help as much as possible. The Secretary-General told correspondents today that he hoped to meet with an Israeli envoy tomorrow to hear their official position on the issue.

Israel has stated that it will not consider releasing any detainees until it knows the whereabouts of seven Israelis believed to be in the hands of groups in Lebanon.

Today the Secretary-General said he had heard about the whereabouts of some of the Israelis but that he had to be very careful and not say anything which could undermine his efforts. "I have to be very careful at this stage," he told correspondents, "not to say anything which could be counterproductive".

Mr. Perez de Cuellar met yesterday with Iranian Ambassador Kamal Kharrazi, for a two-hour discussion on the hostage situation. He described it as "very helpful" and said that the Iranian Government was trying to use its influence with different groups to obtain the freedom of hostages.

The Secretary-General reiterated today that he was willing to go to the Middle East if necessary.

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Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar met today with the Foreign Minister of Morocco, Abdellatif Filali, to discuss the overall situation in Western Sahara.

Following the meeting, the Secretary-General said that the exchange had been "extremely useful", and that many points had been cleared up. He had maintained his position that 6 September should be the date for the cease-fire between the Government of Morocco and the liberation front, POLISARIO, he added.

Last week, the Secretary-General released a statement calling attention to recent military action in the Western Sahara in which he appealed to all parties to maintain the truce until the formal cease-fire became effective.

Today the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) joined the appeal of Mr. Perez de Cuellar to the parties involved to refrain from any action that would undermine the process leading to the implementation of the Peace Plan. The OAU Secretary-General expressed the hope that the referendum would be held as planned, and thus bring about the final solution to the conflict in Western Sahara.

Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar told correspondents today in Geneva that he hopes to meet with representatives of POLISARIO around 25 or 26 August.

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The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has concluded that the failure of the Iraqi delegation to address the question of the treatment of ethnic groups in Iraq and of the citizens of Kuwait after 2 August 1990 is a matter of great concern.

In concluding remarks, the expert from Germany stressed that the Committee had not yet received information which would enable it to assess the human rights situation in Iraq. Accordingly, he called upon the Government of that country to include all the requested information in a report due later this year.

Addressing the Committee, the representative of Iraq said the Kurdish problem was not a question of racial discrimination but rather a situation that was fomented from abroad. He maintained that the Kurdish minority had never been socially nor economically disadvantaged in Iraq.

The Iraqi representative promised the future cooperation of his Government in providing the Committee with the full picture of the situation in his country as requested.

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The Special Committee on decolonization would reaffirm the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence, in conformity with the Declaration on decolonization, according to a draft resolution introduced in that Committee by the representative of Venezuela.

The Committee heard from several petitioners on the political status of Puerto Rico since it opened debate on the subject yesterday. Many expressed support for the right of the Puerto Rican people to freely choose the island's future status, whether independence, statehood or a free association agreement with the United States. Some speakers called on the United States to end what they termed its colonial oppression of Puerto Rico.

The Committee concluded its hearing of petitioners today and is expected to take action on a revised version of the draft resolution tomorrow.

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Members of the UN Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities have called for the convening of an international conference on religious freedom, with the participation of the three monotheistic religions.

The plea was made as the Subcommission took up the issue of the elimination of religious intolerance and discrimination at its current session in Geneva. Members said religious revivalism and fanaticism were leading to violence and instability in many parts of the world and that religion was often used as a vehicle for disguising other purposes, including political

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objectives. Some members called for an in-depth study of religious fanaticism.

Several non-governmental organizations urged that there be a binding international instrument on the freedom of religious belief.

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Eleven Caribbean countries have requested that the Caribbean Community be granted observer status in the General Assembly.

The Community is a regional group which was established in 1974 to facilitate the economic integration of its members through the establishment of a common market, and to coordinate regional foreign policy.

The request was contained in a letter to the Secretary-General dated 1 August.

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Eugene Adoboli, a senior official of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), has been appointed Executive Secretary of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) by Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar. Mr. Adoboli, a citizen of Togo, began work for UNCTAD in 1963.

The JIU, which was established by the General Assembly in 1968, is based in Geneva. Its mandate is to enhance the administrative efficiency and proper use of funds of all specialized agencies of the United Nations system, with the exception of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

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Transnational Corporations undertake a surprisingly broad array of activities which could be labelled "environmentally sound", according to the results of a benchmark survey conducted by the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations.

The survey which dealt with transnational corporations and the environment, included more than 200 of the world's biggest and most environmentally innovative transnational corporations. Its aim was to inform governments, international organizations and the broader public of the state of environmentally sound management in transnational corporations, and to set up a model framework for transnational corporations and other major firms not as yet engaged in environmental management.

Responding to the study, the corporations indicated that they considered protection of the atmosphere to be the most important issue of the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), to be held from 1 to 12 June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro.

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The preliminary results of the survey have been released at the meeting of the UNCED preparatory Committee in Geneva.

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